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SUBJECT: UNHCR 44TH STANDING COMMITTEE: FOCUS ON REFUGEE
REINTEGRATION, IDPS, AND PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS

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[1](#)B. GENEVA 250

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY. During the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR's) March 3-5, 2008 Standing Committee meeting, UNHCR managers briefed Member States on progress made in three thematic areas: a) return and reintegration of displaced populations; b) the global work plan for internally displaced persons (IDPs) operations and progress on mainstreaming these efforts into UNHCR's regular operations; and c) the High Commissioner's 2008 Dialogue on protracted refugee situations. Ensuring stronger coordination between UNHCR and UN agencies, governments, NGOs and development actors, as well as ensuring that UNHCR focuses on its mandated responsibilities were the key messages to UNHCR by Standing Committee members under this agenda item. END SUMMARY.

Return and Reintegration

[1](#)2. (U) Assistant High Commissioner for Operations (AHC-O) Judy Cheng-Hopkins presented an update on implementation of UNHCR's policy framework and strategy in support of the return and reintegration of displaced populations. Since issuing its reintegration policy framework in September 2008, UNHCR has been actively supporting operations and working with partners to put this policy into practice. UNHCR's overarching objective is to be more assertive in engaging in early recovery programs located in areas where refugees and/or IDPs have returned. An important strategic aspect of UNHCR's role is to advocate strongly for the inclusion of reintegration needs in national and area recovery/development plans. Cheng-Hopkins noted that this has now become a standard approach in reintegration operations. She explained that UNHCR is an active participant in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), "One UN" and other inter-agency planning processes in all reintegration operations. According to Cheng-Hopkins, many UNHCR offices have also sought proactive partnerships with national and development actors to help rehabilitate areas where refugees and/or IDPs have returned.

[1](#)3. (U) Cheng-Hopkins discussed UNHCR's work in Liberia, where she maintained that steady progress is being made in maximizing the opportunities for joint programming and achieving synergy in the delivery of projects and services.

UNHCR is now focusing on protection, the rule of law and peace education and, in collaboration with other agencies, is phasing out of activities in the health and education sectors. She also noted that other humanitarian operations, such as in Burundi and Afghanistan, have been placing their focus on mainstreaming reintegration needs/activities within development priorities. Outstanding challenges for UNHCR reintegration activities include fragile security situations that restrict operations and hampers much needed development programs in areas of return; housing, land and property problems that fall beyond UNHCR's mandate; and difficulties mobilizing resources from multi-donor trust funds, international financial institutions and bilateral development agencies. As part of the 2010-2011 UNHCR planning process, a guidance note on planning reintegration operations in relation to the new budget structure has been drafted, and reintegration indicators for Focus, UNHCR's results-based management software, have been reviewed. Programming and guidance tools will also be improved and mainstreamed into the Focus/Global Needs Assessment training program. Finally, UNHCR will continue to promote new approaches in all reintegration operations and to increase its engagement with development actors, both on the ground and at the global level, with the overall goal of sustainable reintegration.

14. (U) Several member states, including the U.S., the Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, and Japan noted that UNHCR does indeed have a role in reintegration activities but advised the organization against going beyond what it is mandated to do. All emphasized the need for a coherent and coordinated approach to return/reintegration activities and the need for UNHCR to engage with national governments, development actors (including the United Nations Development Program, or UNDP), and bilateral development organizations much earlier in their planning process. The UK noted that the UN Secretary General (UNSYG) will be addressing reintegration of displaced populations in May; Cheng-Hopkins noted that UNHCR was fully involved in the discussion and development of the paper that the UNSG will present at the May meeting. In response to the USG's concerns regarding UNHCR's length of engagement, its new budget structure, and the potential for UNHCR to become involved in "protracted reintegration" activities, Cheng-Hopkins emphasized that Pillar 1 of UNHCR's new budget structure (the Refugee Pillar) will be funded from core program funds and will cover support (care, maintenance, etc.) for refugees as well as initial/early reintegration activities for refugees, while Pillar 3 (Return/Reintegration) will focus on longer-term projects that will not receive funds unless donors pro-actively select them. This division between Pillar 1 and 3 will assist UNHCR in obtaining longer-term transition funds and firewall any diversion of resources from UNHCR's core refugee mandate.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

15. (U) AHC-O Cheng-Hopkins also presented the update on UNHCR's implementation of the global work plan for IDP operations and progress on mainstreaming. Cheng-Hopkins stated that the IDP Protection Cluster has been implemented in 22 UNHCR field operations to date; UNHCR is leading or co-leading the Protection Cluster in 15 of these. In addition to staffing support, technical expertise is provided on a standing basis and through support missions to address protection-gap areas (e.g., older persons, disabilities or protection in natural disaster situations). She noted that over 100 field staff has received protection training and protection cluster coordination training and that the IDP Protection Handbook is being field-tested and used increasingly in the Field to assess, plan and design protection responses. In terms of the Camp Coordination/Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, it was been activated in nine IDP operations, in both natural disaster and conflict situations. In 2008, the cluster trained over 200 UNHCR and partner staff in CCCM principles, and provided technical support to IDP operations in Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo

(DRC), Somalia, Pakistan, South Africa and Uganda. In addition, the cluster produced and introduced the use of several key programmatic tools including the Camp Management Toolkit. The Emergency Shelter Cluster (ESC), which has been rolled out in five operations, organized 10 workshops and one real-time training in Somalia, preparing 252 people for emergency deployments as coordinators, technical specialists, trainers and information managers. UNHCR also trained 192 of its own and NGO partner-agency staff on supply and warehouse management, as well as eight regional training sessions for participants from 58 countries including Headquarters. UNHCR's technical staff has also been playing a significant role in the clusters that UNHCR does not lead to ensure that assistance to various beneficiary groups is aligned and mutually supportive and to help shape the clusters' policies, tools and training.

16. (U) Cheng-Hopkins emphasized that UNHCR continues to refine its involvement in IDP situations and has made notable progress in fully mainstreaming IDP issues within its structures, policies and programs. For instance, the planning guidelines sent to UNHCR field offices and Headquarters units for the 2010-2011 program contain clear instructions from the High Commissioner to outline the needs and actions within UNHCR's agreed responsibilities as cluster lead, and/or the agreed responsibilities as an operational or sector lead agency. In November 2008, the first Learning Program on Internal Displacement for UNHCR senior managers was launched. The four-day intensive curriculum brought together 25 UNHCR managers working in major IDP operations; this program will ultimately be made mandatory for all UNHCR staff. The goal is to equip UNHCR staff with the tools needed to effectively contribute to the inter-agency response to internal displacement situations. In 2009, UNHCR will also focus its attention on issues related to the protection and assistance of IDPs living in urban areas, notably those in protracted situations. UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) is already carrying out a study on the subject, the results of which will inform the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges in 2009 which will focus on displaced people in urban situations. The issue of climate change and its impact on internal displacement will also be a topic on which UNHCR will continue to look at. A paper on UNHCR's position with regard to natural disaster scenarios, "Climate change, natural disasters and human displacement: A UNHCR perspective (23 October 2008)" is available at: www.unhcr.org/climate.

17. (U) The Ethiopian Delegation, speaking on behalf of the Africa Group, noted that although protection of IDPs is a UNHCR lead under the Cluster Approach, UNHCR's work should not be duplicative of what other organizations are already undertaking in this regard, and reminded UNHCR that issues of climate change and urban IDPs should be led by someone other than UNHCR. Ethiopia also strongly emphasized that given that coordination with national and regional governments is key to any successful operation dealing with people who are displaced internally. The UK, Sweden, Canada, and the Netherlands welcomed UNHCR's efforts on taking more of a lead on IDPs, especially in mainstreaming IDP activities and training into its programs. Japan and the U.S. emphasized the need for UNHCR to coordinate closely with the other Cluster leads and co-leads, using agencies' comparative advantage whenever possible. Both noted that UNHCR staff and resources are already over-stretched in many cases, focusing on increasing outflows of refugees and movements of IDPs in many areas of the world. The U.S. questioned whether UNHCR should engage in situations of natural disasters. Arnauld Akodjenou, UNHCR's Director of the Division of Operational Services, responded that UNHCR would only work in situations of natural disaster if: 1) there is a need or request by the UN Country Team, and 2) in areas where refugees or returned refugees are affected. (Note: Given this explanation, coupled with UNHCR's enhanced work with IDPs, UNHCR could justify a role in almost any situation of natural disaster; the U.S. will need to track this issue closely. Interestingly, Switzerland requested that UNHCR include discussion of the organization's exit strategy in IDP

operations. End Note.)

Protracted Refugee Situations

¶18. (U) George Okoth-Obbo, UNHCR's Director of International Protection Service, presented UNHCR's update on the High Commissioner's 2008 Dialogue on protracted refugee situations. The High Commissioner's Dialogue took place in Geneva, December 10-11, 2008 and although it is not a formal policy or decision-making body, the High Commissioner considers its deliberations important in helping UNHCR shape its future policies, strategies and activities for tackling the challenges under discussion. The 2008 Dialogue was attended by representatives of 87 States, eight bodies from the United Nations system, three intergovernmental organizations, 27 NGOs and 10 other organizations, as well as academics and experts attending in their personal capacity. There are more than 30 protracted refugee situations (PRS) worldwide. While UNHCR is making efforts to address all of these situations, five in particular) Afghan refugees in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, Burundian refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania, Eritrean refugees in Sudan, Croatian and Bosnian refugees in Serbia, and Rohingya in Bangladesh) had been selected under the High Commissioner's Special Initiative on Protracted Refugee Situations (PRS) to exemplify the nature and complexity of the problem and to energize efforts to drive forward either durable solutions or improvements in the life of the refugees concerned as they remain in asylum. Discussion centered on finding traditional solutions (voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement) for refugees in PRS, the role of the international community (political/diplomatic engagement and financial support), the role and "incumbent responsibilities" of the countries of origin, as well as the role of refugees themselves.

¶19. (U) Drawing on the results and momentum generated by the Dialogue, UNHCR has accelerated its plans with respect to the five protracted situations under the High Commissioner's Special Initiative. Efforts are under way to elaborate comprehensive plans, in close coordination with host countries, countries of origin, NGOs, international organizations and other stakeholders. UNHCR will work to bring the issue of protracted refugee situations onto the agenda of inter-agency and other relevant fora, such as the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Peacebuilding Commission, Delivering as One, the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, international financial institutions and the African Union, to enhance collaboration with multiple actors in resolving protracted situations.

¶10. (U) All delegations who spoke noted their appreciation for the High Commissioner's initiative on establishing a yearly thematic dialogue. The delegations of Bangladesh, Thailand, Iran, and Pakistan emphasized that responses to the issue of PRS should focus on voluntary repatriation and resettlement, given that in their view, local integration is almost impossible to undertake because many refugee-hosting countries cannot support additional increases in their population. The U.S. noted that it looked forward to the paper on follow-up to the discussion, which should include priorities and recommendations on next steps, and highlighted the need for greater collaboration among UN agencies to address and resolve PRS. Okoth-Obo stressed the need for a holistic approach in dealing with PRS, including using all three durable, depending on the situation of a population. He also agreed that coordination is key and said that UNHCR is currently working with development partners in several PRS (the ILO in Bangladesh, UNDP in Sudan, JICA in Dadaab). UNHCR plans to put together a strategy on how to work with other partners in PRS. The next dialogue will focus on urban populations.